

NURSING AS A PROFESSION



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DEFINITION OF NURSING

There are a number of definition of nursing by different theorists. However the most widely used definition today is by Virginia Henderson, an author, a researcher in International council of Nursing. The International Council of Nursing defines nursing as: The unique function of the nurse that is to "assist the individual, sick or well, in the performance of those activities contributing to health or its recovery (or to peaceful death) that he would perform unaided if he had the necessary strength, will or knowledge".

What is a Profession?

In simple terms, a profession is an occupation requiring special education. A profession is defined as an occupation with ethical components that is devoted to the promotion of human and social welfare (Potter & Perry 2001). A profession is generally notable from other occupations by its requirement of specialized training, and acquiring knowledge and skills pertinent to the role to be performed.

Nursing has certainly become one of the dignified professions in the world. Not only for its specific services and specialized skills, but highly valued and recognized for its ongoing body of knowledge, continuing research, with its code of ethics and autonomy of practice. Nurses also uphold standards set by professional organizations, such as nursing councils.

NURSING AS A PROFESSION

The nursing profession as we see it today is greatly influenced by the work of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing. Her vision and thinking contributed to nursing becoming a respected health care discipline.

As nursing moves forward steadily, there has been

a wide range of roles for the nurses: care giver, decision maker, protector and patient advocate, teacher, manager, counselor, coordinator, leader, role model and researcher. Nurses can work in a variety of settings in the above mentioned roles.

The professional nurses perform various functions. For instance, giving basic nursing care is one of the main and most essential functions of the nurse and it is very important. When providing care to patients, the nurse understands the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the individualized patient. This makes the nursing profession different from other occupations. They are not simply the "hand maiden" of the doctors. They are caring health professionals working towards the same goal as other health care members.

Range of specialty areas varies from family practice, adult and child health, mental health, acute care, paediatrics, geriatrics and super specialty like oncology nurses. Furthermore the expanded role of the as a nurse practitioner needs to be highlighted with the expanded knowledge and the rapid changes in health care needs throughout the world nurses are working hand in hand with other health professionals. Furthermore, the role of a nurse, as a policy-maker, shows the stance of nursing profession in the public health care sector.

A "nurse" is a very important person in the health care team along with the other allied health professionals. Nurses are responsible and accountable for all activities embodied in their practice. Nursing is a caring profession, focusing on the actual and potential human problems. Nursing interventions are based on evidence based practice. Nurses also use their clinical decision making skills in giving care to patients. With the expansion of knowledge and skills, nursing ladder can go as high as up to doctoral level.

ACADEMIC CORNER

NURSING PROCESS MODEL

Nurses use the Nursing Process Model in formulating care for their patients; in the nursing process, the first step is to assess the condition of the patient by obtaining a detailed health history of the patient. S/he takes objective data as well as subjective data to plan individualized care for patients. Once health history is complete, s/he then formulates a nursing diagnosis which is very different from the medical diagnosis. Based on this, the next step is to plan care for the patient. In this third step, the short term and long term goals are identified and care is prioritized based on life-threatening needs. While prioritizing Abraham Maslow's of hierarchy of needs are considered (Potter & Perry 2001).

Finally the nurse evaluates the care given and checks if the goal has been met or the plan needs to be reassessed. Therefore, this is an ongoing process of continuous care. In this caring profession, nurses also take care of the families' physiological and psychological needs along with the patients' problems (Potter & Perry 2001). While providing care to patients, nurses teach patients and relatives how to manage their illness or injury including post treatments and home care needs. For instance, when the nurse gives bath or does any other procedure, s/he teaches the relative to give care to their loved ones. A clinically competent nurse is able to assess the level of alertness, pick up the subtle changes, and effectively communicate these changes with the concerned other health professionals in a timely fashion.

CONCLUSION

Nurses provides holistic and individualized care to patients, families, communities and populations. Nurses protect and promote the health of patients through nursing assessment, diagnosis and treatment (Potter & Perry 2001). According to Florence Nightingale (1859) the goal of nursing is "to put the patient in the best condition of nature to act upon him". Furthermore with a wide range of roles given to nurses; today, all around the world, nurses are playing an important role in shaping the development of health policies and acting as part of health reforms. Evidently, nursing profession has had an increased recognition as a professional group aimed at education and practice through optimization of health and abilities, and advocacy of care for all patients and the larger community.

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